

PROGRAM MEMO

Program Memo: Title 390, Protection and Safety # 3-2005

TO: Holders of Title 390

FROM: Todd Reckling, Administrator
Office of Protection and Safety

Signed by: _____, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

Date

RE: Protocol for Intake and Initial Assessment of Child Abuse/Neglect Reports on an HHSS Employee, Family Members of an Employee or Others Having N-FOCUS Access

Effective Date: July 15, 2005

NOTE: Recent N-Focus changes now allow an audit trail identifying the name and computer location of any individual accessing case specific Intake information on N-Focus. Similar changes will be made in the near future to allow an audit trail of the name and computer location of any individual accessing case specific Initial Assessment information on N-FOCUS. Access to case specific Intake or Initial Assessment by HHSS staff who do not have cause to view the information based on job function may result in disciplinary action.

The following protocols are provided to assure the most objective Initial Assessment, to ensure confidentiality for the individual involved in the report and to reduce or eliminate potential allegations of bias on the part of Initial Assessment staff who may be involved.

The following protocol must be followed in instances in which:

1. An employee of HHSS is involved in a report of abuse or neglect (if access to NFOCU is unknown, the Help desk may be contacted); or
2. A family member of an HHSS employee is involved in a report of child abuse or neglect; or

3. A report of child abuse/neglect is received concerning a non-HHSS person having access to N-FOCUS.

It is recognized that the Health and Human Services System employs a large number of employees and provides access to N-FOCUS to a large number of non-HHSS persons through contract. If the Protection and Safety worker or Supervisor does not know that the person involved in the report is an employee, family member of an employee, or other person having N-FOCUS access, the Initial Assessment may proceed as with any other report within the Service Area. If employee status is identified at a later time, the worker will consult with their supervisor about appropriate action at that time.

As always has been protocol, the Initial Assessment will not be assigned to any worker who has a non-professional relationship or other conflict of interest with the individuals involved in the intake.

All Initial Assessments involving an HHSS employee, family member, or other person with N-FOCUS access should be assigned to a Health and Human Services office outside the Local Office or Service Area, in which the employee resides or is officed. The Intake Supervisor or Initial Assessment Supervisor, in consultation with the Protection and Safety Administrator should determine the best office for that intake to be assigned. This may include, after review, a request by the Protection and Safety Administrator to another Service Area to assist with the Initial Assessment. As with any child abuse/neglect referral, a copy must be forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agency noting the name of the Service Area and staff person/supervisor assigned to the initial assessment. All policies related to conducting the Initial Assessment must be followed, including written notification to the employee/family member concerning the finding following the conclusion of the assessment.

Entry of Information on N-FOCUS: The intake should be recorded on N-FOCUS. As mentioned previously, the system allows tracking of individuals who access Intake information. Initial Assessment information should **not** be recorded on N-FOCUS **until** a final decision is made on whether or not the case will be pursued for prosecution and, if it will be pursued, information on the Initial Assessment should NOT be recorded until prosecution of the case is concluded.

Any questions concerning the application to a specific case of the above protocols should be directed to the Service Area Administrator, Service Area Protection and Safety Administrator or Administrator of the Office of Protection and Safety. General questions concerning this memorandum may be addressed to Chris Hanus, Deputy Administrator for Programs, Office of Protection and Safety. Chris can be reached at (402) 471-9308.